

**A Historical Perspective
of USAID
Water and Sanitation for
Health
and
Environmental Health
Projects**

Morris Israel



USAID, Water, Sanitation, and Health

- Water and Sanitation for Health (WASH) Project
 - 1980 - 1994
- Environmental Health Project (EHP)
 - 1994 - 2003
- 20 years of field experience in delivery of clean water to rural populations in developing countries

USAID Environmental Health Project

- Indefinite Quantity Contract
 - Provide USAID with access to expertise in environmental health
- Objective
 - Reduce mortality and morbidity in children under the age of five associated with infectious diseases of major public health importance by improving environmental conditions or reducing exposure to disease agents

EHP Expertise

- Health impact design and measurement
- Water supply, sanitation, and hygiene
- Behavior change
- Community-based management
- Participatory planning and implementation
- Legal frameworks
- Institutional and human resource development
- Technology and technical standards
- Operation and maintenance
- Financial viability

USAID Historical Context

- **Until 1970s** - Failure of development; expensive, non-functioning systems
- **1970s** - Appropriate technology research, locally manufactured India Mark II pump, Ventilated Improved Pit (VIP) latrine
- **1977** - World Water Conference, Mar del Plata, Argentina
 - “Water and Sanitation For All”

USAID Historical Context

- **1980s** - International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade
 - Low-cost hardware alternatives
 - Community responsibility for repair and maintenance
 - Need for health and hygiene education
 - One billion with improved water supply
 - 750 million with improved sanitation

USAID Historical Context

- **1990s** - From “Hardware” to “Software”
 - Sustainability
 - Community participation and the role of women
 - Institution-building and human resource development
 - Community-based decision-making and ownership

USAID/EHP Programming Principles

- **Effective assistance focuses on building local institutions and transferring skills**
 - Consistent, reliable, and available partners work with host organizations to identify problems and solutions
- **Effective assistance requires an interdisciplinary approach**
 - Development problems manifest themselves in multiple ways

USAID/EHP Programming Principles

- **Participatory approaches - facilitation not dictation - maximize sustainability**
 - Decisions made without participation of those who must carry them out are made without sufficient data

USAID/EHP Programming Principles

- **Role of government is in sector management**
 - When governments believe an issue is important, they spend money on it, even when little is available
- **Project success depends on strong sectoral policies and institutions**
 - Project success depends on the strength and efficiency of the sector as a whole

USAID/EHP Programming Principles

- **Role of donor is to support design or implementation of national plans**
 - To be sustainable, programs must reflect the government's priorities and directions
- **NGOs are effective partners at the community level**
 - Generally excellent community-level ties and high credibility

USAID/EHP Programming Principles

- **Private sector's role can be expanded if supportive environments exist**
 - Contracting with the private sector to provide services has repeatedly been shown to introduce greater efficiency and cost savings

USAID/EHP Programming Principles

- **Sanitation should be given the same priority as water supply**
 - Safe excreta disposal is more effective for reducing diarrheal diseases
- **Improvement in hygiene-related behavior is a crucial measure of success**
 - Project goals which focus on “hardware” construction only are meaningless in terms of health impact

USAID/EHP Programming Principles

- **Participatory approaches to planning forge linkages in and outside the sector**
 - Achieving health goals requires input from water supply, sanitation, hygiene education, nutrition, tropical disease control, and immunization

USAID/EHP Programming Principles

- **Command and control regulation is not generally appropriate for developing countries**
 - The model is too financially and institutionally resource intensive

USAID/EHP Programming Principles

- **Appropriate engineering design and application is essential to system sustainability**
 - Technologies must be conceptually and physically within the capabilities of the persons responsible for the operation, management, and repair of the system

USAID/EHP Programming Principles

- **Planning for operation and maintenance before facility construction helps ensure sustainability**
 - A key part of any development plan will be the people who will actually operate and maintain the system

USAID/EHP Programming Principles

- **Water supply and sanitation activities must rely on a mix of donor, national, and community resources**
 - Inadequate attention to sector financial issues leads to service disruption, deterioration in water resources and equipment, and inability to expand coverage
 - Every effort should be made to achieve 100 percent cost recovery for recurrent costs

The Principles Assessed

- **Caveats**
 - Not intended to suggest a model for development of the sector
 - Users must be flexible in applying specific lessons to their situations
 - Circumstances may limit the utility of any particular lessons

The Principles Assessed

- **Elements of inferred “model”**
 - Technical assistance
 - Shared responsibility
 - Program strategies
 - Long-term sustainability

The Principles Assessed

- **No package or prescription exists**
 - Each country and region presents different problems, needs, and solutions
- **There are no shortcuts to real development**

The Principles Assessed

- The “model” is
 - Time-tested
 - Presented for the use of people and organizations dedicated to clean water and sanitation for all

The Principles Implemented

- **EHP is applying these principles in**
 - **Nicaragua:** Rural water supply, sanitation, and hygiene - well drilling, latrines, and education
 - **Democratic Republic of Congo:** Improving access to urban water supply and sanitation
 - **Benin:** Linking municipal authority with community needs to reduce diarrhea
 - **El Salvador:** Decentralized institutional support to small urban water supply systems

The Principles Implemented

- **EHP is applying these principles in**
 - **Eritrea:** Improving malaria surveillance using GIS to combine environmental and health data
 - **Peru:** Improving access of the urban poor to water supply and sanitation services
 - **Nepal:** Supporting regional center for vector-borne disease prevention
 - **Central America:** Public-private partnerships for promoting handwashing to improve health

More Information

- **EHP's activities and products can be examined in detail**
 - www.ehproject.org
- **Contact can be made with EHP**
 - Chris McGahey, mcpaheyc@ehproject.org